DEATH VALLEY 49ERS
49
KEEPSAKE

WAGONS HO!

Corral 14 ~ A Living Heritage

by Mary Jo Steele

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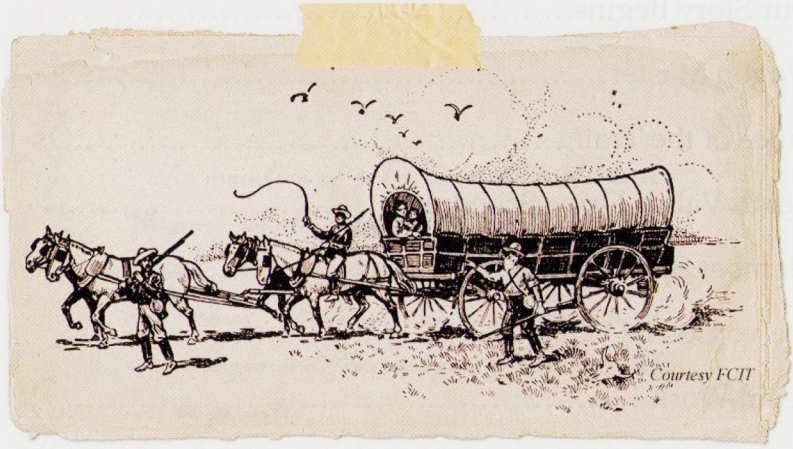
Wagons Ho!

Corral 14 ~ A Living Heritage



By

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Edited and Illustrated by

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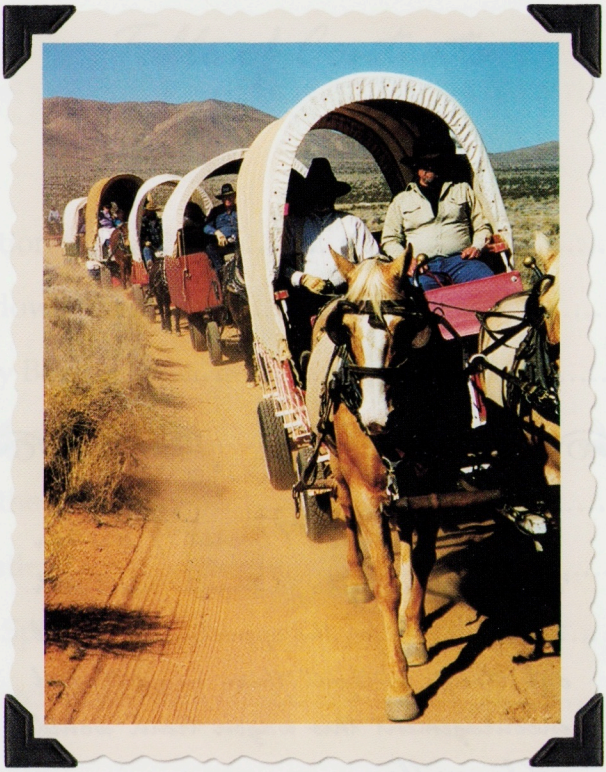
The members of ET I Corral 14 Western Wagons would like to thank the Death Valley '49ers for the opportunity to tell our story. Without their support and encouragement this wagon train would not be possible.



Corral 14's wagon train route from Wade Monument to the Death Valley '49ers Encampment at Furnace Creek Ranch.

Introduction

The 49er Encampment in Death Valley is held every year to commemorate the first pioneers who traveled west with their families in search of the ever elusive gold. Many of them were not drawn by an overwhelming desire to farm and settle the country but to get to the gold fields of California by the fastest route possible. It is written that many of them had intentions in the beginning to return to their home state and buy the farms they could not otherwise afford.

In making this journey they proved time and again the indomitable spirit that is present in all of us. They set out with a goal and, God willing, would accomplish that goal.

Mary Jo Steele, Diner, and Wagon Master Norm Noftsier.

There is no way that those of us living today can actually experience the emotional and physical trials the pioneers had on this journey. For just a minute consider this scenario: The husband walks into a little farm house in Illinois and says "Honey, pack up our kids and whatever else you can't live without. We are going to make our fortune in the

California gold fields." How many of us today could even comprehend such a move? There were no cars, trucks, trailers or moving companies. You had the few treasures your family had accumulated since emigrating from their homeland. Your children were not grown but growing and still vulnerable to childhood diseases that could threaten their lives. Maybe the husband had never driven a wagon and team and knew nothing about the care and maintenance of either. Again, imagine yourself sitting in the middle of a desert where you have no idea where there is a town or even a homestead. In the covered wagon, which is your only protection from the elements, you have a spouse who is ill. There is no cell phone, car or doctor for hundreds of miles. It's impossible for us to empathize with what their emotions might have been. They were so close to the situation they did not realize that in future generations they would be hailed as heroes, as brave pioneers who settled our wonderful land. They very often just endured and overcame. Every year since 1967 the Equestrian Trails Corral 14 Western Wagons has traveled the same trail of these pioneers. We do it as a reminder that we are so fortunate to have had such brave and, yes sometimes greedy people, as our ancestors. They overcame every obstacle and did it without even considering that the future generations would look at what they did and call it impossible.

Our "modern" wagon train is just that. We have comforts such as support trucks, generators, better wagons, food that has been developed to fly to outer space. But in our hearts we sit by a campfire or look out over the desert landscape and try to imagine. We try to understand their hopes and fears, celebrate their victory over the elements and the odds that they would make it to their destination. This is why we do this wagon train every year.

In the pages following you will find a brief summary of the Death Valley wagon train of 1849 and our modern wagon train experiences. We hope you enjoy reading about our travels since our first trip to Death Valley in 1967. As always, we welcome you to take part in our wagon train adventures. This keepsake booklet honors the many wagon train members who have kept the train moving over the last 40 years. A heartfelt thank you is extended to each and every one of them.

Wagon Master Norm Noftsier

Our Shadows In History

For those of you hearing about the wagon trains of 1849 for the first time, here is a brief history of the events.

In the spring of 1849 a group of young men from Illinois and the surrounding area caught the gold fever and decided to band together and make the arduous journey to the California gold fields. They traveled together through Nebraska and Wyoming and up until their arrival in Salt Lake City all seemed to be going as planned. While traveling they were joined by other wagons and families who were on the same journey.

Timing was an important issue for the wagon trains heading west. They needed to get over the higher passes before winter. With this fact in mind, their arrival in Salt Lake City in August left them without enough time to traverse the Sierra Nevada mountains before snow fall. They were going to winter in the safety of Salt Lake City and resume the journey to California in the spring. However, as time passed and their gold fever became worse they felt the need to proceed even though the winter was coming. A wagon train was formed numbering about 100 wagons and 250 people. Several of the families had small children. Their route, they decided, could be one traveled by the Mormons. However, it had only been traveled by horseback and one wagon and never by a wagon train like this one. They were fortunate in finding and hiring an experienced wagon master in Captain Jefferson Hunt. The fee was a nominal $10 per wagon. As the wagon train progressed, the going was slow due to the fact that this was the first wagon train to travel the trail and it included so many wagons, oxen, and cattle. However, Captain Hunt knew his route and the wagon train proceeded to an area near what is now Enterprise, Utah. As would happen, they encountered another train at this point and the wagon master of that train said he had a faster route to the gold fields. Hunt refused to vary from the route he knew to be safest and agreed to continue no matter how many of his party chose to go with the other wagon train. A few of the wagons chose to stay with Captain Hunt. The others struck off hoping to get to their destination faster.

A few days out, the hope of a quicker route faded as they saw a steep cliff that extended for many miles. It's in the area we know now

as Beaver Dam Wash but was named Mt. Misery by these pioneers. After a few days of searching for a route around or down these cliffs a number of the wagons turned back to catch up to Captain Hunt's train. Captain Hunt's wagon train reached Los Angeles two months before the other wagons and without any major losses.

Back to our story of the wagons that left the Hunt wagon train. After much searching they found a difficult but doable passage off the cliffs and continued on their journey. However, none of them could foresee the major obstacle that would soon lie before them; the desolate and inhospitable landscape they would name Death Valley. The wagons split up upon arriving in Death Valley, each trying to find the quickest route to the other side of the impossible terrain. An amazing story, and one we will not go into in detail in this text, is that of William Manly and John Rogers who set out on foot to bring help for the Arcan and Bennett families. Details of this heroic march can be found in William Manly's 1894 autobiography, *Death Valley in '49*.

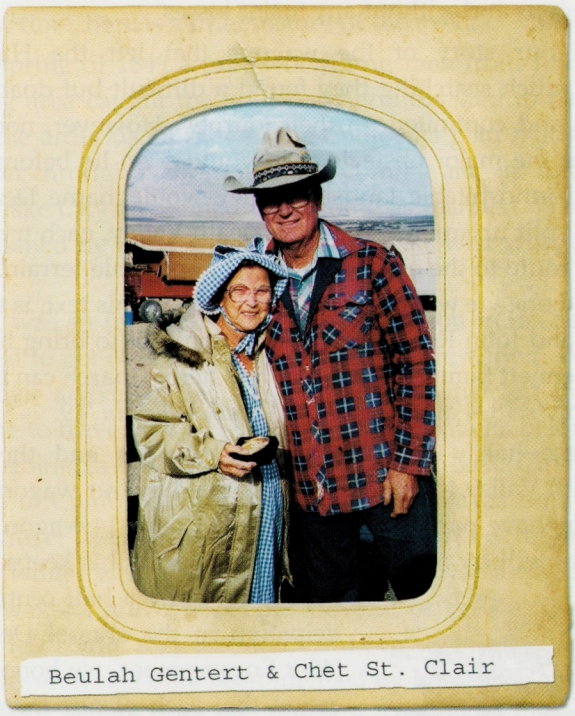
It is these hardy and determined pioneers and their journey through Death Valley that are commemorated by our wagon train each year. So many have participated in the ETI Corral 14 wagon train. It is their story we will try to unfold for the reader in this keepsake. As we approach nearly a half century of participation in the annual Death Valley '49er Encampment, we honor the dedication that each of our members have willingly given to our yearly wagon train to Furnace Creek.

In the winter of 1848-49 news began to come that there was gold in California (...) a regular gold fever spread as if by swift contagion. Mr. Bennett was aroused and sold his farm, and I felt a change in my Oregon desires and had dreams at night of digging up the yellow dust. Nothing would cure us then but a trip, and that was quickly decided on[1].

William Lewis Manly ~ Death Valley in '49

Our Story Begins

The History of Corral 14



Beulah Gentert & Chet St. Clair

Corral 14, once called the Shetland Pony Club of Antelope Valley, was started in the 1960's by a group of folks from the high desert community of Antelope Valley in southern California. Some of them had owned and enjoyed horses when they were younger but now felt they could still have the same fun with ponies. The ponies would be less work and safer to handle for the retirees.

The "ponies only" rule was changed in the mid 1980's to accommodate more club members. The Shetland Club's name was then changed to "Corral 14 ~ Western Wagons". Many more people could now enjoy the Death valley drive with their horses and mules.

Each November our Corral 14 wagon train travels from Wade Monument to Furnace Creek in Death Valley. We stop along the way at Saratoga Springs, Ashford Junction, Salt Tanks, Tule Springs, and Desolation Canyon. These newspaper articles cover some of the early years of our journey:

Shetland Pony Club Treks to Death Valley

By Glenna Thomas

Antelope Valley Press ~ Sunday, Dec. 17, 1967

Antelope Valley's Corral 14, the Shetland Club of the Equestrian Trails Inc. Organization, deserves a big hand for a job well done.

Five women, five men, and two children, with Vern Gentert as their leader, literally hitched up their ponies to their wagons and drove to Death Valley for the annual '49ers encampment.

When they were planning the trip they were told that it couldn't be done but they did it. Their covered "mini" wagons were the exact replica in miniature of their 1849'rs [sic] wagons except for the wheels. They used rubber tires. Incidentally, tire trouble was the only trouble they had. One wagon rolled in on three rims and one tire.

Since they followed trails and rough country where cars and trucks could not go, they had an escort. They had to carry all their own supplies and horse feed in the wagons.

The four little wagons, all drawn by Shetland Ponies, started at Aguereberry Road on Monday. They camped at night in their wagons much as their counterparts had done 118 years earlier.

They finished their sixty mile trek over rugged mountains, through Trail Canyon and arrived at Furnace Creek Ranch on schedule, Friday night at 8 p.m. to be met by thousands of interested spectators.

These modern pioneers even dressed the part, much to the pleasure of the many camera fans who snapped hundreds of pictures from every conceivable angle.

Debra Mullins, the 11-year-old girl who made the trip with her Grandparents, wore a full ankle length dress, a sunbonnet and carried a "play" rifle. She delighted the crowd with her friendly manner and smile as she posed for pictures and told of the fun they had.

The arrival of the wagon train was the only new event of the annual celebration and they were urged to promise that they would return next year.

Wayne Arnold, the four-year-old grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Milton Arnold and the youngest of the party, gave his word that they all would return. ∪

13,000 Celebrate the Days of Covered Wagons

By Ann Japenga

Los Angeles Times ~ Thursday, Nov. 17, 1983

Death Valley– From Tucson to the Salton Sea, the word was out: party in Death Valley.

Nomadic retirees from all over the Southwest piloted their campers toward the National Monument last week for the four-day shindig known as the Death Valley Encampment.

By Friday noon, about 13,000 visitors had transformed the campgrounds into RV cities. It was the 34th year of the encampment, and there were more people and more events planned than ever before—fiddlers' jam sessions, a golf tournament, Western art show, burro race, a liar's contest, square dancing under the stars…

"We feel like were running a carnival," said Jerry Doctor, a member of the Death Valley '49ers, the club that sponsors the event.

Commemorates Earlier Travelers

Although some feel the purpose of the festival has been forgotten, the '49ers were determined to remind encampment visitors they were commemorating the day in 1848 when a desperate band of men and women first struggled over the eastern rim of the vast valley, looking for a shortcut to the California gold fields.

Seasonal park naturalist Rick McIntyre said the encampment is meant to be a celebration of "one of the great heroic stories of the West."

– – –

Dawn turned the Funeral Mountains shades of yellow, rose, rust, green, gray and bone. Tucked up against a hillside far off the main road through Death Valley, a wagon train was coming awake. Tethered ponies grazed beside a circle of 12 covered wagons. A baby cried. A man slithers out of his bedroll, stretched and pulled on his boots.

This was the 20th year [sic] of the Death Valley wagon train, a tradition begun by Vern and Gert [Beulah] Gentert of Lancaster. Vern Gentert is deceased. Gert's second husband, also a teamster, died in that very same campsite in the shadow of the Funeral Mountains during the 1977 Death Valley trek.

100-Year-Old Wagon

A couple of teen-age girls waken stiffly from their perch on the hood of the hay truck—since a scorpion was discovered among their gear, the girls had given up sleeping on the ground.

The two were part of a crew of eight girls traveling in a 100-year-old iron-wheeled wagon. Some of them rode bareback on ponies alongside the wagon—they called themselves outriders.

The owner of the wagon, Linda Menary, operates the Rent-A-Pony business at Tampa and Roscoe in Reseda. When Menary first made this trip 10 years ago, she said it was not without a fight—she was the first woman teamster on the Death Valley trek. Every year since she's brought along a wagonload of the girls employed at her pony-ride operation.

Although some wagon masters have opted to replace the original hand-hewn wood-and-iron wheels with rubber tires for a smoother ride, Menary has chosen to retain the original equipment. "It's a very authentic ride, " she said. "I ask the girls: 'Do you think you could have gone 2000 miles like this?'"

The girls learned how to harness and drive the team. It's their responsibility to get up in the middle of the night to check on the ponies or tarp the wagons if it looks like rain.

Laurie Wheatcroft, 14, said she was in the back of the wagon the second day out, putting together peanut butter sandwiches for lunch,

Linda Menary and her 100 year old wagon pulled by a team of Belgian draft horses.

when the team hitched to the wagon spooked and bolted. The wagon shot off across the desert with Laurie inside.

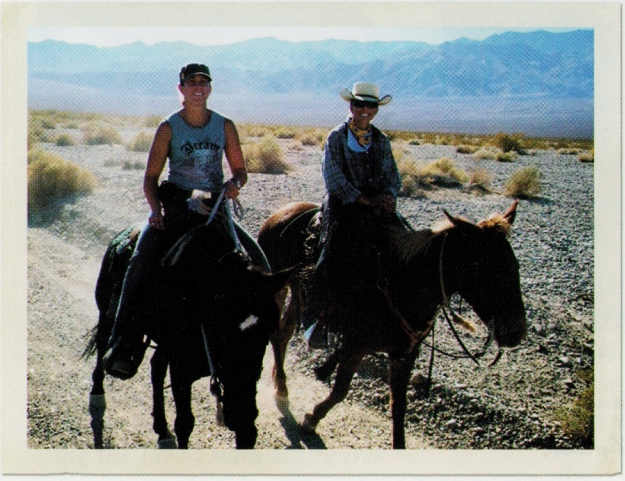
Ketchup bottles smashed. Eggs shattered. Mustard squirted everywhere. Meanwhile, the wagon master had taken off on foot after the runaway rig. Attempting to leap astride a horse, he slipped and rolled, suffering bruises and scrapes.

The rig eventually hit a ditch, cracking the tongue. The ponies came to a halt. Menary's girls rounded up the ponies and saw to it that Laurie was all right while the men repaired the broken wagon with bailing wire.

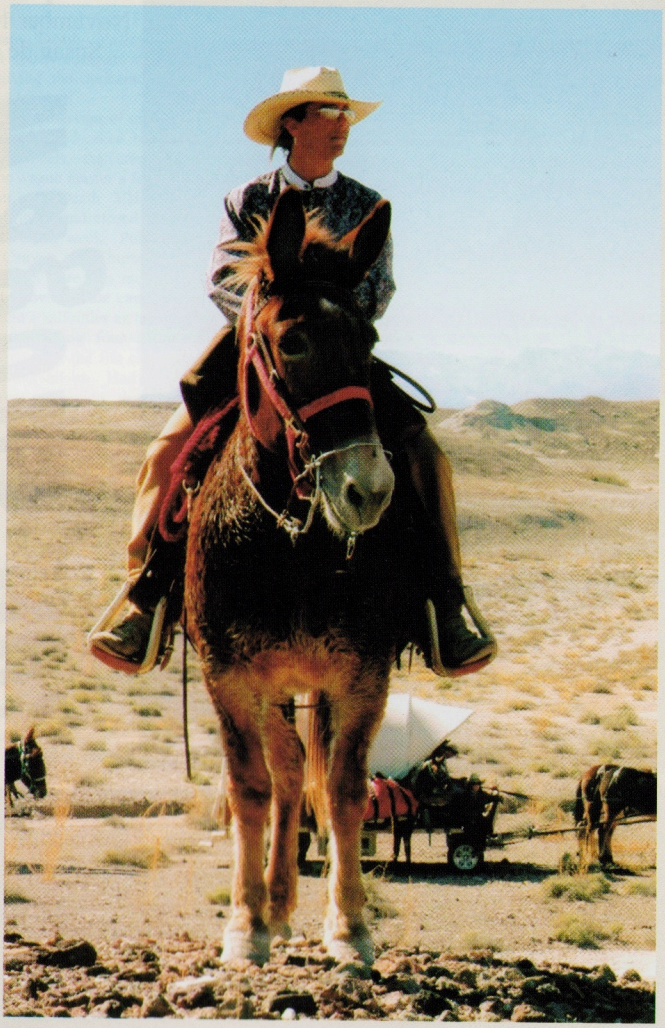
Nitty-Gritty Lessons

This particular episode was sure to make for good stories at school (the girls said their teachers had excused them from classes for the week in exchange for a report on the experience) but there were more nitty-gritty lessons the girls were learning about life on the frontier.

For instance, they ran out of Cokes the second day on the trail. By the last day, they had run out of most everything but peanut butter. Menary suffered along with her group. The girls are responsible for planning supplies, and the team master figured they had to learn the hard way that there are not many grocery stores in Death Valley. U



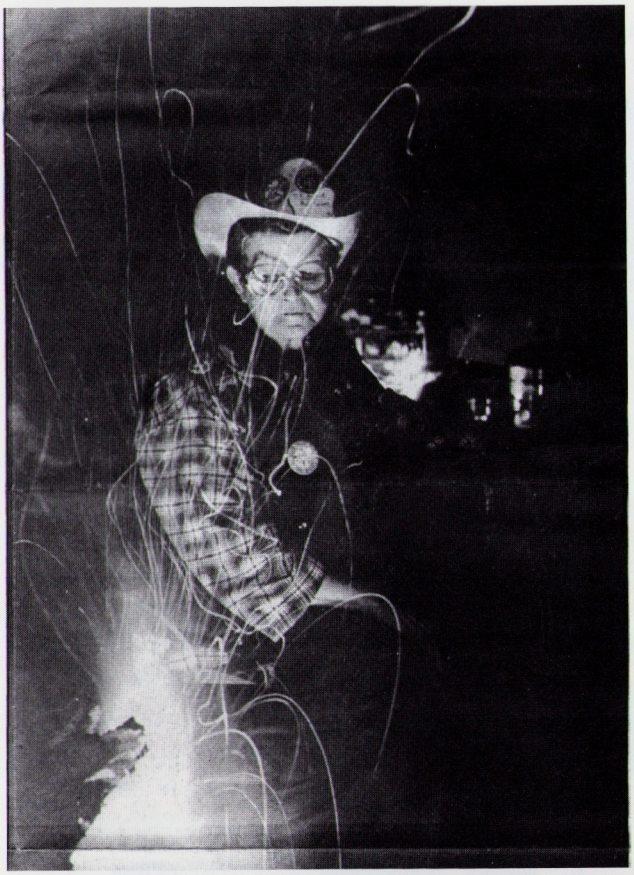
Two of Linda's "Kids" all grown up and still enjoying the wagon train. Pictured are Vanessa Gravani Sammons and her sister Alexandra Gravani.



Cathy Ditsch started coming to Death Valley with Linda Menary when she was a teenager. She has been riding through Death Valley with the wagon train for over 20 years. Here she is pictured with her mule "Molly". (photo courtesy of Gary Simmons)

Wagons Ho!

The Daily Independent
November 11, 1987
Susan de Geus



Wagon train: (Clockwise from top) Veteran rider Beulah Gentert reminisces around the warm glow of a bonfire. Phil Jensen and Joan Cotta, both from Alta Loma, met on a ride three years ago and have been pioneering together ever since. Danny Unger, of Ridgecrest, poses with his horse, Tabitha. According to his grandfather, H.K. Holland, this is Danny's third year as an outrider. Pioneer woman Toni Holland checks her make-up after a long, hard ride. Some supplies sit, ready for use.

Photos by Linda Sappington

Arriving to the applause of thousands of spectators, 15 wagons and several outriders on horseback parade into the resort town of Furnace Creek, Death Valley.

The group gathered last Friday to commemorate Death Valley Days. Their bright spirits outshone the noon-time sun, giving the appearance of a trouble-free adventure.

Only the most observant of on-lookers would notice the mud-caked boots, the bent wagon wheels, the concern reflected on the wagon master's face.

Storms in the Death Valley area caused flash floods and closed roads in the latter part of the week. Pulling into Desolation Canyon, on Thursday evening, the wagons were in a race with a wall of water covering the canyon at a rate of four and a half miles an hour.

"We were traveling four miles an hour. We arrived at the flat camp area just as the water hit us. Had it hit us while we were in motion, the damage could have been disastrous," said Bob Cornelius. The Cornelius' had three generations on the ride—son Chester, daughter Marilyn West of Durango, Colo. and Marilyn's 4-year old daughter, Bronwin. This was Chester's 14th consecutive ride.

Twenty years ago when Beulah Gentert's husband's health prohibited him from riding on horseback, they started the idea of covered wagons. In 1977, Gentert [Beulah's husband] died in Desolation Canyon. His wife finished the last two days in memory of her husband.

"There's a lot of History in this camp," stated Mrs. Gentert. "To see these wagons today makes me so proud."

Wagon Master

Continuing a Tradition

In the wagon trains of the 1800's the wagon master's job held great responsibility. The wagon master had to lead pioneers through rugged and sometimes dangerous territory to a safe and fertile area. He had to bring the pioneers to their destination within a set timeframe, had the final say in any plans and decisions and often had to solve many a dispute.

Before a good wagon master rolled the wagons, he dispatched scouts to see what was to come ahead. Quick reconnoitering by scouts provided crucial information that allowed the wagon master to make quicker decisions with higher confidence and move the wagons forward at a faster pace.

Today, the wagon master carries many of the same responsibilities. He or she might be called on to decide what time the wagons should leave camp, demonstrate how to fix a broken axel, cure a sick horse or organize a trailer ride for a lame mule.

Wagon Masters Past & Present

Vern Gentert ~ 1967- (term unknown) *In Loving Memory*

In 1967 Vern Gentert and four other men, five women and two children dressed in pioneer costumes and drove their Shetland ponies and "mini" wagons sixty miles to Furnace Creek in Death Valley.

Gerv Keten ~ 1976- (term unknown) *In Loving Memory*

Sunday, May 8, 1853 ~ Waiting to cross [the Elkhorn River]. There are three hundred or more wagons in sight and as far as the eye can reach, the bottom is covered [...] with cattle and horses. [...] There were three horses and some cattle drowned while crossing this place yesterday.

Amelia Stewart Knight[2]

Bob Cleveland ~ 1986

In Loving Memory

Bob Cleveland was known for his quick wit and colorful jokes. Always sporting a cigar, he enjoyed driving a lively team.

One of his favorite ways to entertain around the campfire was to put on a women's pioneer dress, complete with bonnet, and sing his own rendition of the song Molly Baker. At his side, his wife Candy was always ready to sing along.

Bob Cleveland prepares breakfast from the back of his well stocked chuck wagon.

Many things can go wrong on a six day wagon drive, all of which can be entertaining if the bearer of the misfortune has the right attitude. Bob shows off his Broken Spoke Award from the 2003 drive.

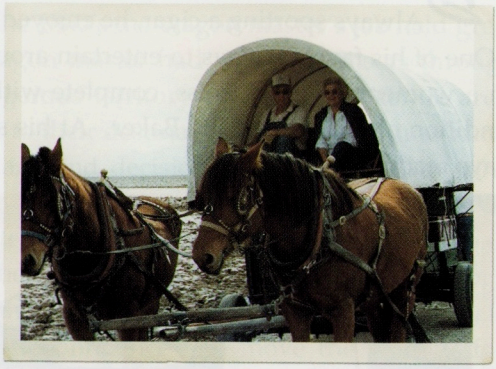
Chuck King ~ 1986-1987

San Bernardino Sun[3]

Desolation Canyon, Death valley—It was easy picking out the wagon master among the 10 horse-drawn rigs camped here last week.

In part, it was Chuck King's air of authority, his command of man and beast. His knowledge of the trail.

Also, it helped that he was wearing a ball cap with "Wagon Master" embossed above the bill.



Salt flats flank the West Side road where Chuck and Rosalie King rest their team Hunk and Chunk.

It had been four hard, dusty days for King and the wagon train. They had come about 45 miles north through Death Valley and would reach their destination, Furnace Creek Ranch, after an easy five-mile jaunt the next morning.

"We had a little bit of everything this year. The brakes on one wagon froze up. The tongue on another broke. We've had some riders thrown off their mounts. Yep, we've had a time," said King grinning. ∪

Los Angeles Times

Past Wagon Masters Bob Cleveland (left) and Chuck King (right) make a breakfast omelet while family members look on.

H. K. Holland ~ 1988-1992

In Loving Memory

H. K. Holland and his wife Toni were valued as long time members of Corral 14 and respected for their knowledge of wagons, horses and mules. Their home was in Ridgecrest, Ca. They hosted wagons trains at that location in addition to participating in the Death Valley Drive. The Death Valley drives were H.K.'s way of relaxing from the stress of his occupation as he owned the local Mortuary in Ridgecrest and was well respected and loved by the community he served for many years. He served as president of the Desert Empire Friends of the Fair for fifteen years. He was elected Citizen of the Year by the Elks Lodge as well as being actively involved in the Ridgecrest Chamber of Commerce. He was a dedicated horse breeder using his own breeding plan to produce magnificent black Arabians to use in his business and on the wagon trains. Some of the long time members of the Corral still remember the many thoughtful things that H.K. did. One such event was providing a delicious BBQ at Desolation Canyon each year. It was cooked on the spot from large trailers and served piping hot. He occasionally treated his campfire friends with his version of the song *Streets of Bakersfield*. We all had a laugh. When a long time friend of H.K.'s was asked to describe him his words were "He was a friend above all others.

The hearse H. K. used for funeral services in Ridgecrest.

Wagon Master H. K. Holland prepares his team for a 16 mile drive to a campground off Highway 395.

Chet St. Clair ~ 1993-2004

Chet St. Clair experienced Death Valley for the first time in 1989. He rode his mule Bertha as an outrider with Cary Seale's wagon. I guess it's safe to say he was hooked. The experience started a long time association with Corral 14 and Death Valley. Chet fell in love with everything about Death Valley and in 1990 built his own wagon and broke a team so he could participate in the drive that year. He was accompanied by his wife Pat and their five year old grandson, Willy. Chet has been a dedicated participant to this drive every year since becoming wagon master in 1993. He has worked tirelessly to improve the relationship between Corral 14, the 49er's and park rangers. Chet and Pat are always part of the wagon train and have brought their children and grandchildren along to experience the wonders of Death Valley. In 1999 Chet was the driving force that put Corral 14 into the Sesquicentennial Wagon Train. He led approximately six wagons on this great occasion.

(clockwise from top left) Chet and his mule Bertha. Chet and Pat St. Claire with their grandson, Willy. Chet St. Clair, Alexandra Gravani (in costume) and H.K. Holland.

Linda Menary ~ 2004-2006

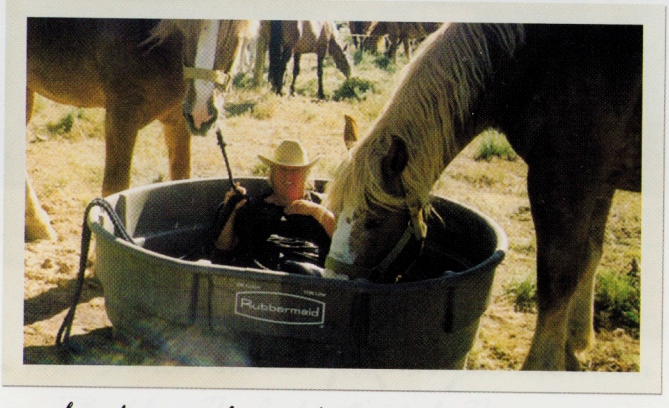
In Loving Memory

Linda Menary was distinguished as Corral 14's first woman driver and took on life as a frontier woman with ease. She was of strong Canadian stock and decided at a very early age that her love of animals would dictate the road she must follow. She started giving pony rides with her one pony at the age of 13. That grew into the pony ride and petting zoo that she later owned called "The Farm" in San Fernando Valley.

Linda was an expert rider and teamster. One could compare her attributes of perseverance to those admired so much in our frontier forefathers. She could handle a green team over rough country and at the end of the drive say what a good time she had. Her favorite drive was the Death Valley wagon drive. She participated in this drive almost every year since 1973. She was the current president of ETI Corral 14 Western Wagons at the time of her death. Linda often brought a group of young kids who worked for her at The Farm on the Death Valley Wagon Train so they could experience this piece of history and share her passion for it. Many of those kids could not afford the cost of the trip so year after year Linda absorbed much of the cost for them.

Linda was a master at doing the unexpected and it was no different on the Death Valley Wagon Train. One year she showed up with a rooster as a part of her wagon camp. He would crow long before sun-up and there were many remarks about what a good stew he would make. Of course that did not happen. She liked to walk the rooster on a leash at the rest stops. It was not unusual for her to arrive at Ashford Junction or Wade's monument with multiple kids and a wide range of animals in tow. The animals could be anything from horses and mules to goats and chickens. All enjoyed their time in Death Valley.

Linda has left a wonderful legacy in the children she shared her love of animals with and all the folks lucky enough to drive with her on a wagon train.



Linda was always doing the unexpected!

Death Valley Wagon Train 1994

Corral 14 members gather around the campfire.
Desolation Canyon, November 11, 1993

Evelyn and Noel Soive, both natives of France, come from Washington state.

Sam and Sharon Cadaret from Mojave with their trusty Waggin' Buddy. The Cadaret's mule Thumper.

Norm Noftsier ~ 2006-Present

Norm Noftsier picked up the reins as wagon master after Linda Menary's passing in 2006. Norm's history with mules goes back to his childhood when he worked on his family farm in Upstate New York.

As an adult Norm moved to Lancaster, California where he served in the Air Force. After his military discharge he decided to make this desert community his home. With his time in the Service behind him, Norm got back into riding and driving mules and horses and from his ranch in Lancaster, hosted numerous day and weekend rides and drives. Upon retirement, Norm attended wheelwright school in Idaho. His wheelwright shop is a scene right out of the past with a pot belly stove and every kind of woodworking tool imaginable.

After building a wagon and training his mule Opie to drive, Norm joined Corral 14 in 1998. Since that time he has missed only two Death Valley Wagon Drives. His knowledge of wagons, mules and harnesses is invaluable to the group.

In 2002, Norm was instrumental in adding a new leg to the Death Valley Wagon Drive. The wagons start in Pahrump, Nevada, and cross what remains of the Immigrant and Spanish Trails to spend a day at Tacopa Hot Springs. Here the local school children are given a tour of the wagon train which might include feeding a mule or learning about Dutch oven cooking. Then it's off to Shoshone for their Western Days Celebration and on to Ashford Junction to meet with the rest of the group. Norm is also very active in supporting the annual Corral 14 Lone Pine to Bishop Wagon Drive.

Norm now trains mules and horses to drive and enjoys farming with his mule team. He built a hitch wagon and trained a 4-up team of black mules to compete at Bishop Mule days. His winnings included Reserve in the 4-up hitch class and winning the pulling competitions. He is a dedicated mule man and has a gift for communicating with our long eared friends.

Rules of the Trail

As is true with any group endeavor, all wagons trains have "rules of the trail." Ours is no different and our rules have not changed much in 40 years. The rules give everyone a guideline to help make the wagon train an enjoyable experience. Here are our rules of the trail from 1987:

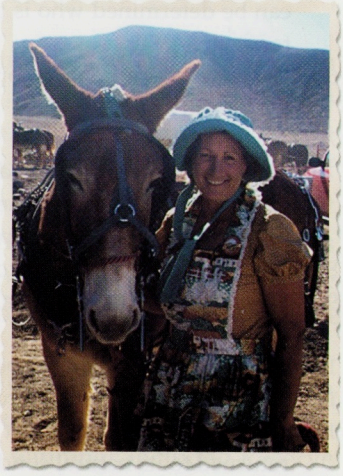
1. Each wagon is responsible for: own food & cooking, human water (5 gallons per person), camp chairs, coolers for food and beverage, sleeping and camping gear, facilities for tying off stock at night (no trees or fences), cleaning of own camp and stock area, brakes on wagons, shoes on ponies, horses or mules (many miles of rocky roads).
2. This is a "FAMILY" activity—No unsuitable actions such as drunkenness, profanity or vulgarity.
3. Dogs may come if you keep the following rules: MUST be on a maximum of 10 foot leash at all times. MUST have current license and rabies certificate. MUST have a crate or fence to contain your dog if asked to by Wagon Master. MUST clean up and bury any messes left by dogs. If dog rules are broken, Park Animal Control will be notified.
4. Since this is a wagon drive, we are limiting the campers and trucks to the emergency and working equipment only. All campers and motor homes must have corral meeting approval.
5. If the Corral is charged by the Park Service for damage or clean up and it can be determined who is the offender, the Corral will charge the offender for same.
6. No watering of ponies, horses or mules for at least one hour after arriving at camp at night.
7. A committee of 5 will be appointed by the wagon master to inspect all wagons and animals to judge their fitness to take the trip. If a majority of the committee feels that the wagon or animal is unsafe or abused it will not be allowed to make the trip.
8. Stock will not be allowed to graze on natural vegetation.
9. Hay, straw, or manure shall not be left on the ground after camp. It must be picked up or buried.
10. Holes dug by stock must be leveled after each camp.
11. All vehicles must stay on roads or parking lots.
12. Fire rings and ashes must be buried, litter picked up, and each campsite returned to its natural condition.
13. If you break the rules, and the majority of the safety committee agrees, you will be asked to leave with no refund of fees.
14. BE CAREFUL and HAVE A GOOD TIME!

Death Valley Drive Schedule

Here is an example of a typical Death Valley wagon drive schedule:

Sun: All wagons meet at Ashford Junction before 10:30AM.
Mon: Depart at 9:00AM. Camp at Salt Tanks. 16 miles.
Tue: Depart at 8:00AM. 2 hour lunch stop. Camp at Tule Springs. 24 miles.
Wed: Layover Day. Waffle Contest in the morning, Potluck Dinner and Costume Contest at 6:30PM.
Thu: Depart at 8:30AM. Camp at Desolation Canyon. Club meeting and election of officers. 18 miles.
Fri: Depart at 10:00AM. Arrive at Furnace Creek Inn parking lot by 12:00PM. Parade from Inn to Furnace Creek Ranch, arrive at 12:30PM. Continue to campsite at Furnace Creek Ranch Fiddler Stage area

Some little cowhands don't need much to take a bath.



Sue Alcott models a very useful and stylish prairie bonnet.

Rory Alcott shows off his trick riding skills.

Member Spotlight

Al and Barbara Chinn met back when they were both in the armed forces. Their wagon displays the date and location of their marriage: "A. & B. Chinn Farm, Established the 22nd day of Sept. 1945 ~ Market Street, San Francisco, Ca."

In preparation for their first drive (California's Sesquicentennial Wagon Drive in 1999), Al and Barbara bought a wagon and a team of mules and set forth to do most of the mule training themselves. That same year they joined the Death Valley Wagon Train for the first time.

Al and Barbara are both in their 90's and enjoy the wagon train every year along with their trusty mules Nattie and Pattie. Very often Al and Barbara share their wagon with various family members. They both have a great appreciation for the wonders of Death Valley and love to share their stories about past wagon trips around the campfire. Later in this keepsake we have included one of Barbara's many poems about her experiences on the Death Valley Wagon Train. We hope you will enjoy taking the journey along with her.

Al and Barbara Chinn enjoy some down time after a long day (left). Barbara shows off her pioneer costume (right).

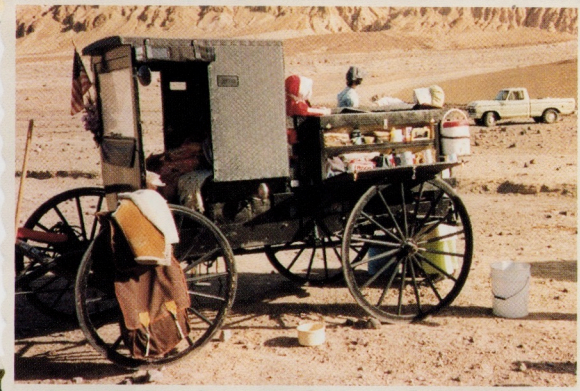
We've Gotcha Covered

The Wagons of Corral 14

Each year, an assortment of wagon types assemble to participate in the Death Valley Wagon Train. Here is a sample of the wagons that one might see gathering to make the drive.

This Concord Stagecoach replica was built by Van Peterson. It took him three years to build with the help of plans obtained from the Oregon Historical Society.

The Whites brought a peddlers wagon. It provides plenty of storage space but lacks sleeping quarters.



The youngest teamster to drive in the 1998 Death Valley Wagon Train, Cody Alcott (12), is seen here arriving at Furnace Creek.

Linda Menary brought this authentic wooden wheeled covered wagon, reported to be 100 yrs old.

Art Lumley loved to bring a wagon load of kids. Here he is with his "Kidco" wagon pulled by his team of mules Eck and Zek.

A "colorful" peddlers wagon owned by the Whites. Its sign reads: "Doc Small's Magic Jackass Elixir ~ A Panacea For Man & Beast"

Carl and Donna Everitt's camp wagon is all closed up for the night. Note the rubber tires for easy riding. Cody and Wes Alcott's wagon in the background.

Teamwork

The Hitches of Corral 14

To pull a wagon, a horse or mule or a combinations of both can be used. The count can increase depending on the proportion between the weight of the wagon and its contents and the weight of the animal pulling it. Here are the different combinations and counts we commonly use:

One horse pulling a light delivery wagon. This type of wagon was part of the delivery and merchandising scene in America for nearly 100 years.

Here, Diner and Pat pull as a team. A combination of a horse and a mule is sometimes called a share cropper's team.

The count can increase to three-abreast:
Here is Chet St. Claire driving a 3-up of mules. His swamper (assistant) is Alexandra Gravani.

4-up hitch:
Four Shetland ponies are needed to pull the same weight as two full size horses or mules.

5-up hitch:
Dave "Doc" Fly with his five mini mules. Sometimes these feisty fellas have different ideas on how the day should start out!

6-up hitch:
The Van Peterson Family Wagon pulled by six Morgan horses during the 1994 Death Valley Wagon Drive.

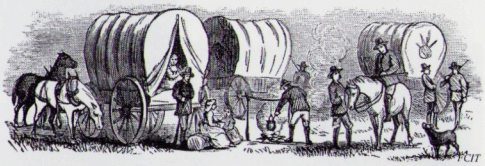
Each year we have a wide variety of horse, mule, and pony breeds and sizes. These might include draft breeds like Shire and Percheron, small drafts like Haflinger and Fjord, all sizes and colors of pony, mustang, Morgan, you name it. We have mules that are Thoroughbred, Quarter, Arabian, and draft horse crosses. In recent years mini mules, which are a pony cross, have been very popular.

Waggin' Buddies

A Wagon Train's Best Friend

Dogs have always been a part of wagon trains and our Death Valley wagon train is no different. Each year a variety of breeds accompanies their owners and teams on the trail to Furnace Creek. Sometimes we get the feeling that *they* are the wagon boss. They ride in the wagons next to their owners during the day and are company for everyone in camp after the wagons have circled for the night. Pictured here are a few of our more recent Waggin' Buddies.

Waggin' Buddies come in all shapes and sizes. This little fella's name is Macho. He has been on many wagon drives and comes every year with his owner Maggie Benson of Arizona.



Dave "doc" Fly and his sidekick "Rowdy" come from New Mexico.

Sierra asks, " when do we eat?". She came with Debbie Olson.

Dogs made significant contributions during the epic journeys of explorers such as Lewis & Clark and Daniel Boone and were often worth their weight in gold as they traveled with the wagon trains bound for California and Alaska.

Dogs not only provided companionship but served to guard camp from intruders and wild animals. On occasion they even worked as hunters to provide food and helped as herders.

In the high country many dogs were invaluable to the miners and were used as beasts of burden to haul sledges and carts[4].

Zip belongs to Cathy Ditsch and comes from Arizona every year to make sure all is in order.

FCIT

Dutch Oven Dishes

Norm Noftsier's Favorites

Be sure to start your campfire early so you will have lots of hot coals.

ONE DISH CHICKEN DINNER

1 whole chicken
4 cups shredded cheddar cheese
1 can medium Ortega chilies
2 can cream of chicken soup
12 corn tortillas

Boil chicken and debone. Tear tortillas into small pieces. Warm chicken soup and Ortega chilies. Layer tortilla pieces, chicken mixture, and then cheese. Repeat until all is in Dutch oven. Save some cheese to sprinkle on top. Cover Dutch oven and bake using 6-8 briquettes on the bottom and 10 on top. Cook approximately 20 minutes until cheese is melted and bubbling.
Serves: approx. 6

CHERRY CRISP COBBLER

2 (30 oz) cans of cherry pie filling
2 cups sugar
2 cups flour
1 cup oatmeal
½ cup chopped pecans
1 cup butter
1 tsp vanilla

Line a 12" Dutch oven with heavy duty foil. Pour cherry pie filling into oven and spread evenly. In a separate bowl combine sugar, flour, oatmeal and pecans. Stir to mix. Add vanilla. Spread topping evenly over cherries. Cut butter into 1 tbs. pats and place on top of dish.

Cover Dutch oven and bake using 8-10 briquettes on the bottom and 14-16 on top for 45-60 minutes.

Serve topped with whipped cream or ice cream. Serves 12-14. (If you are on a wagon train it will probably only serve 6-10.)

JOHNNY-CAKE

4 cups sour milk
4 eggs beaten
1/4 cup melted butter
4 cups cornmeal
2 cups all-purpose flour
2 cups whole wheat flour
1/3 cup sugar
2 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt

In a large bowl mix together milk, eggs, and butter. In a separate bowl sift together cornmeal, flours, sugar, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. Mix dry ingredients into wet ingredients 1 cup at a time until well blended. Spoon mixture into a lightly greased 12" Dutch oven and spread evenly.
Cover Dutch oven and bake using 8-10 briquettes bottom and 14-16 briquettes top for 45 minutes or until golden brown.

NOTE: For even browning make sure to turn the oven and lid 1/4 turn in opposite directions every 10 minutes.

Serve warm with honey butter.

Serves: 12-16

MOLASSES PUDDING

1/2 cup molasses
1/2 cup milk
2 cups flour
1/2 cup butter
1 tsp. baking soda
1/2 tsp. salt
raisins (optional)

Blend molasses and milk. Add in butter, baking soda, salt and mix well (butter will be chunky). Add in flour, 1/2 cup at a time. Add raisins of you like. Pour this thick dough into a buttered deep bread pan, spreading evenly. Put pan on top of pebbles in a large pot of slow-boiling, shallow water. Liquid should only go half way up the sides of the pan. Cover and steam for 1 1/4 hours. Serve sliced, as is, or drizzled with syrup.

A Brief History of the Dutch Oven

A Dutch oven is a thick-walled cast iron cooking pot with three legs, a wire bail handle, and a slightly concave, rimmed lid. The rimmed lid and legs allow coals from the cooking fire to be placed on top as well as below. This provides more uniform internal heat and lets the inside act as an oven[5].

Dutch ovens are well suited for slow cooking, such as in making roasts, stews, and casseroles. It is possible to use them as true baking ovens, to prepare biscuits, cakes, breads, and even pies. A smaller baking pan can be placed inside the Dutch oven, used and replaced with another as the first batch is completed. It is also possible to stack Dutch ovens on top of each other, conserving the heat that would normally rise from the hot coals on the top. These stacks can be as high as 5 or 6 pots!

When the young American country began to spread westward across the North American continent so did the Dutch oven. A Dutch oven was among the gear Lewis and Clark carried when they explored the American Northwest in 1804-1806. So important was the Dutch oven to the people of Utah that it is now their official state cooking pot. Utah is not only the headquarters of the International Dutch Oven Society but the site of the World Championship Dutch Oven Cook-off which is a major event during the Festival of the American West[6].

With proper care, a Dutch oven will render years of service. The Dutch oven was so valuable that wills in the 18th and 19th centuries frequently spelled out the desired inheritor of the cast iron cookware[7].

Awoke this morning, found it raining hard as it could pour down. The men went out of the wagon, made some coffee and beans and brought the breakfast back to the wagon, which we all crowded into. Used a trunk for a table and made out a very comfortable meal. After eating they put the dishes under the wagon where they remained till four o'clock, when the rain ceased and I left the shelter of the wagon for the first time today[8].

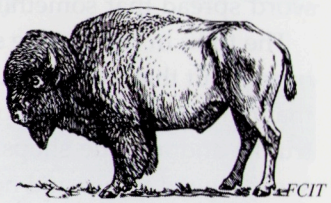
Jane Gould Tourtillott, Saturday, May 17, 1862

Provisions

Women were often responsible for growing, preparing and storing food at home. Families relied heavily on their knowledge and experience when determining how much and what kind of supplies they would need on the trail. A wisely packed, well-stocked wagon made all the difference to the wagon trains of the 1800s.

An excerpt from an article in the St. Joseph, Missouri Gazette dated March 19, 1847[9]:

The amount of provisions should be as follows; to each person except infants:
200 pounds of bread stuff (flour and crackers)
100 pounds of bacon
12 pounds of coffee
12 pounds of sugar
Each family should also take the following articles in proportions to the number as follows:
From 1 to 5 pounds tea
From 10 to 50 pounds rice
From 1/2 to 2 bushels beans
From 1/2 to 2 bushels dried fruit
From 1/2 to 5 pounds saleratus [baking soda]
From 5 to 50 pounds soap



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Buffalo Chips (...) are dried very hard & appear considerable like the excrements of cattle from which they are distinguished by their bluish white color after long exposure to the weather. As soon as we collected enough we are going to cook with them to see how it goes. I have been somewhat particular in describing them for since the term has been admitted into fashionable circles they have become our object of interest. They will be our only dependence for fuel for several hundred miles & to us at least they are so good a matter of convenience that we forget their origin[10].

Joseph Warren Wood, May 23, 1849

The Games We Play

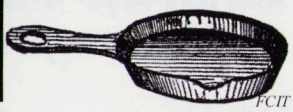
Waffle Contest

The wagon train has a layover day at Tule Springs to rest the stock and riders and spend some time just having fun. There are all kinds of games that can be played with a horse or mule and a fearless rider. Our layover day at Tule Springs begins with a waffle contest. Other games continue throughout the day and are enjoyed by kids and adults alike.

Legend has it that sometime in the 1970's ETI member Luise Peterson came across an old waffle iron while perusing an antique shop. This wasn't your ordinary waffle iron. It didn't have any chrome, fancy logo, or even a cord to plug into the wall. It was cast iron and built on a platform for sitting over a camp stove. She bought the waffle iron thinking it might be fun to experiment with this "old fashioned" style of making waffles during the upcoming Death Valley Drive. During the wagon drive that year she made waffles for her family and the word spread that something good was cooking at the Peterson wagon.

The folks in camp were so impressed with the way the breakfast treat turned out that by the next year there were quite a few old waffle irons that made the trip. Most of them were scrounged out of old cupboards, trunks and antique shops. The resulting waffles were topped with all sorts of good things and no one could decide which one was the best.

Lance Peterson making breakfast for Grandma Luise & Grandpa Van.



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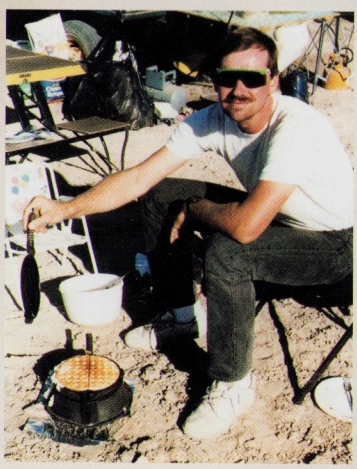
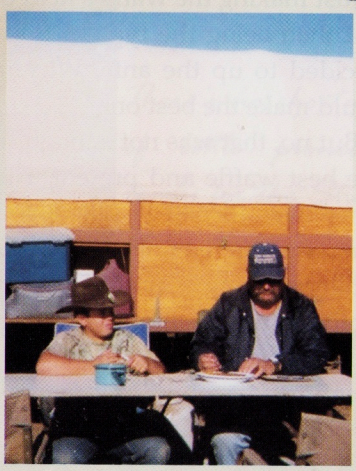




Brian Peterson (left) cooking his entry for the waffle contest. Waffle Contest Judges Zack Breen and Ron Remy (right) take their job very seriously.

FCIT

Doc Colvin in a hurry to make his waffle by the deadline.

Just making the waffles held everyone's interest for the first few years but then being the type of folks we wagon train people are, someone decided to up the ante. Why not have a waffle contest and see who could make the best one?

But no, that was not enough. We began to wonder, "Who could make the best waffle and present it to the judges with the craziest, funniest story over all?" The stories could be about the origin of the recipe or the secret ingredients. The waffle chef could even show his or her dish while sporting a funny or unusual costume replete with a mask or clothing to make them more humorous and unbelievable.

Thus the waffle contest was created and it still provides a lot of laughs and wondrous creations for breakfast on layover day at Tule Springs.

Fun Times Had by All

The Costume Contest used to be very popular with many and was often held around the campfire to lend a mysterious air to the activities.

Sometimes the party turns into mischief. Wagons have been TPed, mule's hooves painted iridescent orange, and one time a few of the mules appeared the next morning with new spots and rings around their eyes. Of course, no one knew who did it.

8

Costume contest

3

Dogs come in handy

There's no shortage of little pioneers ready for the Stick Horse Race.

Our wagon trains were never complete without a costume parade.

Other games might include a musical tire race, sack race, or tent pitching.

2

Come on mule!

3

three-legged race

The

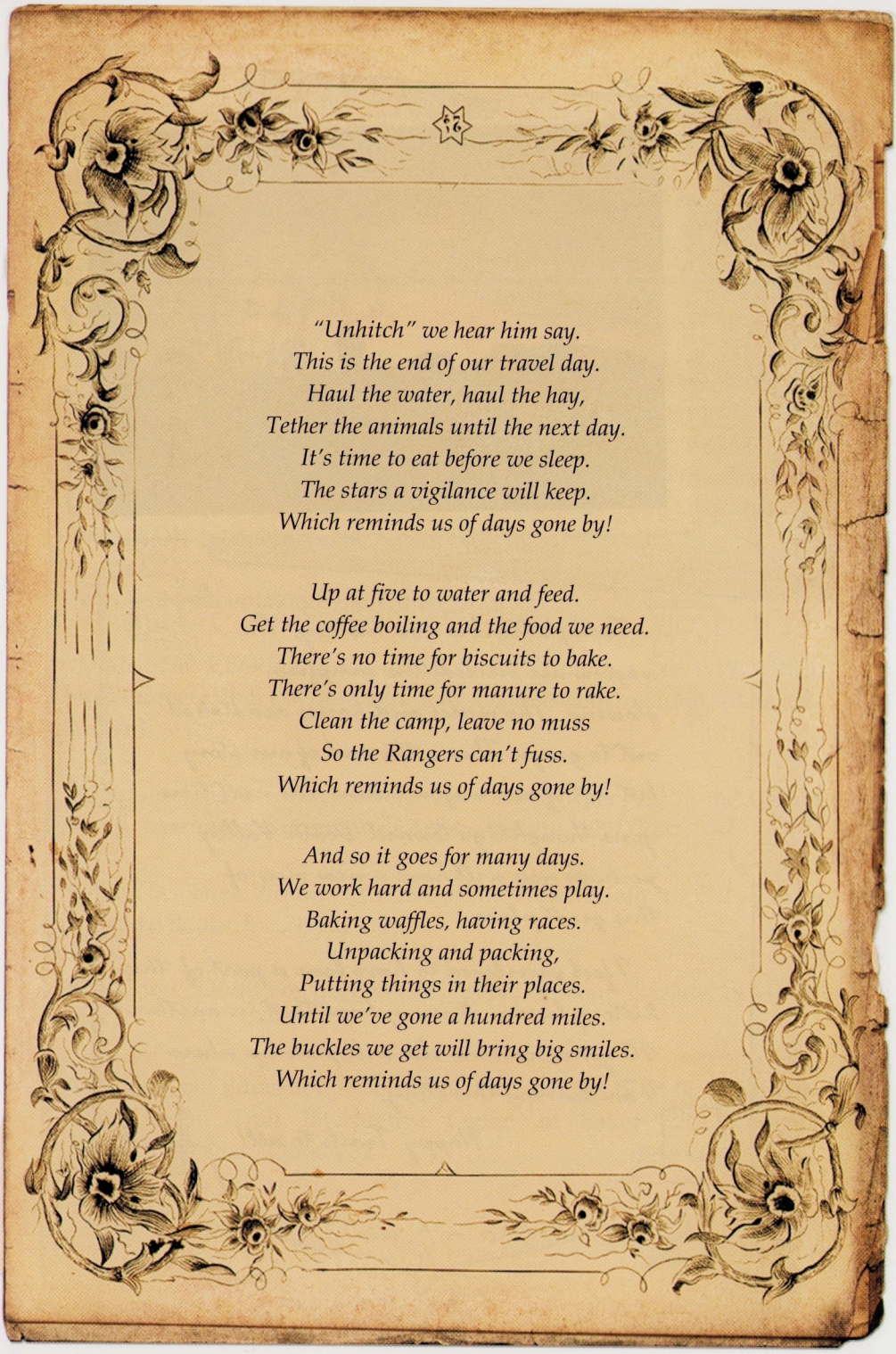
Reminders of Days Gone By

by Barbara Chinn ~ November, 2001

At Wade's Monument we did convene.
The mountains of Death Valley could clearly be seen,
Beige and brown and purple too,
With dots of black that looked so skewed.
Which reminds us of days gone by!

For 34 years the wagons have rolled
To Furnace Creek Ranch with stories retold.
Tracing the trail of the Pioneers
With despair, hardship, and confusion too.
Only a few lived to start life anew.
Which reminds us of days gone by!

A wagon master is the boss
Of all that must be done,
From early dawn until the setting sun.
"Circle the Wagons" is his call
As he stands in his wagon—he looks so tall.
Which reminds us of days gone by!



"Unhitch" we hear him say.
This is the end of our travel day.
Haul the water, haul the hay,
Tether the animals until the next day.
It's time to eat before we sleep.
The stars a vigilance will keep.
Which reminds us of days gone by!

Up at five to water and feed.
Get the coffee boiling and the food we need.
There's no time for biscuits to bake.
There's only time for manure to rake.
Clean the camp, leave no muss
So the Rangers can't fuss.
Which reminds us of days gone by!

And so it goes for many days.
We work hard and sometimes play.
Baking waffles, having races.
Unpacking and packing,
Putting things in their places.
Until we've gone a hundred miles.
The buckles we get will bring big smiles.
Which reminds us of days gone by!

Today's trail is now history. The wagons are circled, the campfire glowing. The mules and horses are staked out to graze. This is the end of our story but not of our wagon train. The next time your thoughts go toward Death Valley perhaps you will have a new view of this great place.

I feel privileged to have been a part of this history lesson. It is my hope that in another 40 years someone else will pick up where I am leaving this story.

Happy Trails to all!

Notes

[1]William Lewis Manly, Death Valley In '49 (California: The Pacific Tree & Vine Co., 1894) 59

[2]Lillian Schlissel, Women's Diaries of the Western Journey (New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1992) 204

[3]Steve Cooper. "Wagons, Ho! Modern-day Pioneers trace routes of '49ers by wagon train", San Bernardino Sun, [date unknown]: D1.

[4]Mark Derr, A Dog's History of America: How Our Best Friend Explored, Conquered, and Settled a Continent (New York: North Point Press, 2004) preface xiv, 144

[5]http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_oven

[6]"Utah State Cooking Pot - Dutch Oven," [Internet - WWW, URL], http://pioneer.utah.gov/research/utah_symbols/cooking.html, [date unknown]

[7]Ragsdale, John G.. Dutch Ovens Chronicled: Their Use in the United States. (Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 1991) 28

[8]Lillian Schlissel, Women's Diaries of the Western Journey (New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1992) 219

[9]Kay Conn, "Outfit For Oregon", St. Joseph, Missouri Gazette, 19 March 1847

[10]Oregon Trail Education Resource Guide from the BLM National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Baker City, Oregon. Oregon Trail Diary Quotes 32

Acknowledgements

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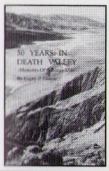
Death Valley '49ers Organization Statement of Purpose

Death Valley '49ers, Inc. is a nonprofit, volunteer organization whose mission is to promote understanding and appreciation of Death Valley and its history. Its only source of funding is through memberships and donations. It holds an annual encampment in November in Death Valley for members to learn about, celebrate, and enjoy the Death Valley area, and it provides scholarships to deserving high school graduates from the area to further their education. The '49ers work in cooperation with the National Park Service. Annual membership is open to all, and a yearly Keepsake is provided for each membership in keeping with our mission.

Please visit our website at www.deathvalley49ers.org
or write P.O. Box 338, Death Valley, CA 92328.

Death Valley '49ers Books



50 Years In Death Valley, Memoirs of a Borax Man by Harry P. Gower
Death Valley '49es publication #09 164 pages in Soft Cover

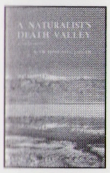
"A collection of reminiscence and anecdotes of the Death Valley area between 1909 and 1960. Mr. H. P. (Harry) Gower was not only a resident but had a major influence on the course of events in the region during those years." - Dean Lemon, Life Director, The Death Valley '49ers

"Harry P. Gower was not just a spectator but often a prime mover in events in Death Valley. Surveying for railroads, routing claim jumpers, and managing a pioneer resort hotel." - L. Burr Belden, Past President, The Death Valley '49ers

The Lost Death Valley '49er Journal of Louis Nusbaumer by George Koenig
Death Valley '49es publication #11 84 pages in Soft Cover

Louis Nusbaumer (1819-1878), was a German immigrant who left New York City in March, 1849, traveled to Independence, Mo., and there began his trip overland with William Lewis Manly and John Rogers to California.

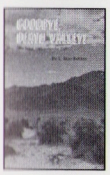
This is the story of his journey, which was kept in tow small notebooks, recovered in 1966, illustrated throughout with drawings, photos and maps. Made available here by the Death Valley '49ers organization.



A Naturalist's Death Valley by Dr. Edmund C. Jaeger
Death Valley '49es publication #05 76 pages in Soft Cover

A Naturalist's Death Valley is a primer to help the thousands of admiring visitors to Death Valley National Park get a general picture of its wild flowers, trees, shrubs, reptiles, birds, insects, mammals, fossils and Native Americans.

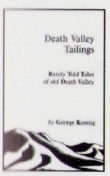
Dr. Edmund C. Jaeger was a nationally known naturalist who authored many book on the flora & fauna of California.



Goodbye, Death Valley! The Tragic 1849 Jayhawker Trek by L. Burr Belden
Death Valley '49es publication #04 68 pages in Soft Cover

This work traces the largest of several parties who became mired in Death Valley during December 1849. Two members of this party, Jayhawkers, kept diaries of their trip which have been preserved.

They were consulted by the author along with a scrapbook and numerous letters kept by the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. This work also includes a list of Jayhawkers.



Death Valley Tailings: Rarely Told Stories of old Death Valley by George Koenig
Death Valley '49es publication #13 132 pages in Soft Cover & 144 pages First Edition Hard Cover

Recaptured within these pages are the stories that will help you to turn back the clock and relive the historic past. This definitely is a different collection of Death Valley tales. Each provides a more complete picture of one of the most fascinating area and eras of the Old West.

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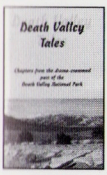

Death Valley Tales, chapters from the drama-crammed past of the Death Valley National Park
by Ten Western Authors Death Valley '49es publication #03 74 pages in Soft Cover

This publication has been in print since 1955, but in this newly updated edition all stories are true.

Mrs. Juliette Brier's account of her trek through the desert in 1849-50 and Russ Journigan's remembrances from the 1930's and 1940's are a wonderful addition, along with John Rogers Death Valley's Unsung Hero in 1849.

Orders may be placed by visiting our website at
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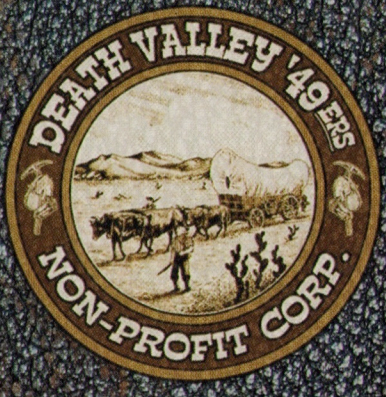
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